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ABSTRACT

Troy State University in Troy, Alabama, has developed an on-line computer-based articulation system to address the problem of two-year college students unsuccessful in transferring to four-year institutions. The system provides an immediate and accurate listing of equivalent two-year college coursework for students planning to transfer to the university. By computer terminal and modem, students and counselors at two-year colleges may access information from the university's computer system and obtain a transfer curriculum guide and an optional contract, good for 3 years, specifying degree requirements for more than 55 majors. The system enables students to plan with confidence their course of study before transfer and provides accurate information specific to each student's academic goal. It is now in place at all 21 junior and community colleges in the state. (Author/MSE)

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COMPUTER BASED ARTICULATION PROGRAM FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

PROJECT ABSTRACT

During the past two years Troy State University has been involved in a project to establish a computer based articulation system on-line with Alabama's two year and four year institutions. This project was brought about in 1984, by a comprehensive process, termed DIRECTIONS '84, to assess and evaluate the educational system in Alabama.

The project was based on the findings that many two-year college students who have the ability, desire, or intention to transfer to four-year institutions do not succeed in doing so. It was suggested that this trend might be the result of the failure of four-year colleges to initiate the kinds of special assistance these students need. Because general education requirements differ among many upper-division universities, it is difficult for two-year college personnel to have all the pertinent information needed in order to help counsel the student in the right program, make the proper course selections, and guide the student toward a career objective. There is also the multifaceted problem of trying to route the large number of students into the small core of skilled advisors.

There is currently no statewide master plan to ensure transfer of general education courses nor a standardized course curriculum among four-year colleges; however, Troy State University has taken a huge step toward conquering these problems by its establishment of a Computer Based Articulation System which has greatly modernized the transfer process and alleviated some crucial problems for two-year college students who enroll at Troy State University.

The Computer Based Articulation System has been created for the general purpose of aiding and facilitating the educational progress of students as they pursue the baccalaureate degree, and it represents an effort to deal effectively with articulation problems related to transfer credit. This system will enable two-year college students to plan with confidence their course of study prior to transfer and will provide accurate information that is specific to each student's academic goal.

The Computerized Articulation System is designed to provide an immediate and accurate listing of equivalent two-year college coursework for students planning to transfer to Troy State University. By means of a computer terminal and modem, students and counselors at two-year colleges may access information from Troy State University's IBM System/36 and obtain a transfer curriculum guide and an optional contract, good for three years, for more than 55 majors offered. The system is now in place at all the twenty-one junior and community colleges in Alabama.

THE COMPUTER BASED ARTICULATION SYSTEM

History

For a number of years, there have been studies on articulation. Attention has been called to the inadequacies of information exchange, orientation, counseling, advising and other articulation services for transfers. During the 1970's, a series of position papers and forceful recommendations were addressed to local, state, and national constituencies. The major conclusions given wide circulation were, "the primacy of institutions to establish their own policies and practices, the need for broad state guidelines and coordination, and the advisability of 'third party' assistance."

In 1984, the State of Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education began a comprehensive process, termed DIRECTIONS 84, to assess and evaluate our educational system. Articulation was identified as one of the critical issues, and a Task force was appointed to conduct a systematic and comprehensive analysis of educational articulation (a) between Alabama's secondary schools and the two year colleges, (b) within the system of two-year institutions, and (c) between Alabama's two-year colleges and the senior colleges and universities. Along with other recommendations of the Task Force, a comprehensive course guide of two-year college common course numbers, titles and descriptions is being developed. It has been recommended that an articulation agreement be developed and implemented with each Alabama four-year college and university. This will include the establishment of a transfer guide by each four-year institution for two-year colleges.

Troy State University has demonstrated leadership by being one of the first in the state to begin creation of such a transfer guide. To further this process, a pilot project has been originated in which TSU will develop a computerized articulation system for Alabama two-year colleges.

Need

Many two-year college students who have the ability, desire or intention to transfer, do not succeed in doing so. It has been suggested that this may be the result of the failure of the colleges to initiate the kinds of special assistance these students need. Of the students who do transfer from two-year colleges, many find that they have taken courses inappropriate for their intended major. Therefore, many students graduate with more credits than are required and spend additional time in college. There is yet no statewide master plan to ensure transfer of general education courses or a standardized course curriculum among four-year colleges. Because general education

requirements differ with many upper-division universities, "it is difficult for two-year college personnel to have all the pertinent information needed in order to help counsel the student into the right program, make the proper course selections, and guide the student toward a career objective." "There is also the multifaceted problem of trying to spread the large number of students across the small core of skilled advisors."

The ideal solution has not been discovered, but Troy State University has taken a major step forward by developing the Computer Based Articulation System which will greatly modernize the transfer process and alleviate some crucial problems for two-year college students who enroll at TSU.

Description of the Project

The Computerized Articulation System is designed to provide an immediate and accurate listing of equivalent two-year college coursework for students planning to transfer to Troy State University. By means of computer terminal and modem, students and counselors at two-year colleges may access information from our IBM System/36 and obtain a curriculum listing for over 55 majors offered at TSU. The listings contain courses required in any given major at TSU with the corresponding equivalent courses at the junior/community colleges in Alabama.

Objectives

The computer Based Articulation System has been created for the general purpose of aiding and facilitating the educational progress of students as they pursue the baccalaureate degree, and represents an effort to deal effectively with articulation problems related to transfer of credit. This system will enable two-year college students to plan with confidence their course of study prior to transfer and will provide accurate information that is specific to each student's goal.

Explanation of the articulation system and proposed contract:

(A) Information provided to students, counselors and advisors will be consistent and reliable.

(B) The system will help to maintain effective articulation and liaison with two-year colleges.

(C) Students who participate in this service will have the option of obtaining the curriculum guide in the form of a "contract' which will be honored upon transfer to Troy State University.

Contract:

(1) This contract will be honored for a period of three (3) years from the date on the contract. The student will graduate under the requirements of the TSU catalog of the year that the contract is dated; however, the student may choose to enter TSU main campus under the TSU catalog current at the time of transfer.

(2) Under this contract, a student must be officially admitted and enrolled at TSU (main campus) directly following his (her) tenure at the two-year college. Should the student enroll in another postsecondary institution during the interim, this contract would become void.

(3) This contract may be declared invalid should unforeseen changes in TSU requirements be initiated by any agency outside of University control. Such agencies may include but not be limited to The State Department of Education, ACHE, SACS, NCATE, NLN, and other accreditation agencies.

(4) Misrepresentation on the part of any party will be cause for cancellation of this contract.

Systemwide Impact

The project should alleviate articulation problems for everyone involved. Academic advisement for potential Troy State University students will be much more efficient. Two year college personnel will be able to access accurate information within minutes from our IBM System/36 through their computer terminal and modem. There will be no need to constantly reevaluate the student's academic records for the purpose of directing them into the right program at TSU or making the proper course selections.

Students can obtain a computer transfer guide at the time of entry to the junior college. The guide will enable them to structure their academic program throughout the first two years of college. Many more students then, will be able to transfer into a baccalaureate program at TSU with little or no loss of credit.

On site visits to the schools will be more frequent, communication will be improved, and the system will help to maintain effective articulation and liaison with two-year colleges. This should result in better understanding of each other's problems and concerns.

The success of this pilot project should encourage other four-year colleges and universities in Alabama to modernize their own articulation policies and practices, and to initiate the kinds of special services students need.

Procedures

Information for the Computer Based Articulation System will be contained in TSU's IBM System/36, and can be accessed through a computer terminal and modem located on other college campuses. The information will be checked for accuracy by the Director of Junior College Articulation and approved by the department chairman of the program involved. The Director of Junior College Articulation will continue to ensure the accuracy of all information entered into the computer.

The Director of Junior College Articulation and his staff will assume the responsibilities for input, update, and maintenance of the system. Copies of information contained in the computer are to be made available to each department chairman. These individuals are to notify the Director of Junior College Articulation of any policy changes or errors that may affect the accuracy of the system. The Director of Junior College Articulation will be responsible for updating the system.

Presidents of participating junior colleges will be asked to designate one individual from each campus to serve as liaison. The liaison will be responsible for sending written notification to the Director of Junior College Articulation outlining any changes at his/her institution involving course content, course requirements, or credit hours. The Director of Junior College Articulation will notify his staff of any updating required in the system.

TSU will coordinate and plan visits to the junior colleges, and will request permission to conduct special sessions on campuses for students desiring to learn of TSU requirements. There will be a follow up of all activities, to include frequent visits, written correspondence and telephone communication.

In order for the articulation system to work as intended, it must have the understanding and support of everyone involved. The success of the project depends upon close inter-institutional communication and cooperation.

Conclusion

Since 1985 the Articulation Program has grown in an exciting fashion. To date it includes the campuses of Troy State University in Troy and Phenix City and also the University of Montevallo. Results from several sources show the use of the on-line-system has grown 49% in just the past year. Enrollment figures for the Fall quarter of 1989 support this growth with an increase of 14%.

Troy State University would like to continue to expand this system eventually including all of Alabamas' four-year institutions. The design of the system makes this a reality with the concept of a centralized articulation program at the forefront.